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## ***Special Care Protocols:***

### ***Do Not Resuscitate - Comfort Care Order***

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**Note Well:** *A Comfort Care Order is issued for the purpose of withholding advanced care to a patient with a terminal medical condition. The order is issued by the patient's attending physician.*

*Any health care provider who, for religious or moral reasons, is unwilling or unable to comply with a comfort care order shall immediately notify their EMS employer in writing of their unwillingness or inability to comply with the order.*

*Any health care provider who is unwilling or unable to comply with a comfort care order shall not be found to have committed an unprofessional act or to have violated any provision of the **Emergency Medical Services Non-Resuscitation Procedures Law of 2001 (D.C. Law 13-224)** because the provider resuscitates a patient.*

#### ***I. Comfort Care Order***

1. The Comfort Care Form is a distinctive form, sequentially numbered and printed on security paper.
2. It will include a statement describing the specific medical or terminal condition of the patient, and the circumstances under which the patient shall not be resuscitated.
3. It will include the name of the patient and an identification number.
4. It will include the signature of the patient (if not incapacitated).
5. It will be signed and dated by the attending physician of the patient.
6. It will include the attending physician's license number and telephone number.
7. If the patient has an authorized decision-maker or surrogate, it will include their name, signature and social security number.

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#### ***II. Comfort Care Bracelet or Necklace***

1. The Comfort Care bracelet or necklace shall be made of metal.
  - A. A plastic temporary bracelet and necklace may be used until the metal bracelet or necklace is received.
2. It will be engraved with the patient's name and identification number.
3. It will be engraved with the attending physician's name and telephone number.
4. It will be engraved with the comfort care order number.

#### ***III. Revocation of the Comfort Care Order***

1. The Comfort Care Order may be revoked at any time by the patient, or the authorized decision maker or surrogate.
2. The Comfort Care Order is consider revoked by
  - A. Removing, cutting, destroying, defacing or discarding the comfort care bracelet or necklace.
  - B. Directing another person to remove, cut, destroy, deface or discard the comfort care bracelet in the presence of the patient, authorized decision maker or surrogate.
  - C. Communicating directly to EMS providers the patient's, authorized decision-maker's or surrogate's intent to revoke the comfort care order.

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#### ***IV. Decision to Withhold Resuscitation***

1. When treating a patient who is in cardiac or respiratory arrest, and the patient is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace, it will be inspected to see if it is intact or has been defaced.
  - A. If the bracelet or necklace is intact and has not been defaced, resuscitation efforts are to cease.
2. When treating a patient who is in significant respiratory distress which would require artificial ventilation to forestall cardiac or respiratory arrest, and the patient is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace that is intact and has not been defaced, providers shall withhold artificial ventilation, including advanced airway management.
3. If resuscitation has been initiated, it shall be withdrawn if the patient is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace that is intact and has not been defaced.
4. If the patient is not resuscitated on the basis of the intact comfort care bracelet or necklace, the provider shall document the do-not-resuscitate response on the Patient Care Report and the incident will be reported to the EMS Supervisor.
  - A. The EMS Supervisor/Fire Company Officer must notify the CQI office of the response prior to the conclusion of their shift.
5. Ensure that the emergency is related to the underlying medical condition. If it is not, then provide all interventions according to protocol as the DNR-CCO is not in effect.
  - A. An example would be a response to a person who is choking on some food and has a comfort care order due to cancer. In this incident, the DNR-CCO would not apply, and you would provide the full range of care afforded under the protocol.

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#### ***V. Decision to Resuscitate***

1. If a patient is in cardiac arrest or respiratory arrest and the patient is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace that is intact and has not been defaced, but the patient, or the patient's authorized decision-maker or surrogate, orally requests that the patient be resuscitated, the patient shall be resuscitated.
  - A. The patient, the patient's authorized decision-maker or surrogate shall remove the comfort care bracelet or necklace from the patient to ensure that the revocation of the comfort care order is honored at the hospital.
2. If a patient is in cardiac arrest or respiratory arrest and the patient is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace that is not intact or has been defaced, the patient shall be resuscitated.
  - A. If there is reason to question whether the comfort care bracelet or necklace is intact or has been defaced, the patient shall be resuscitated.
3. Begin resuscitation if, in your medical judgement, the patient has attempted suicide or is a victim of a homicide.
4. Notify the EMS Supervisor after the incident of problems encountered

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#### ***VI. Comfort of Care***

1. The following interventions may be provided to a patient who is wearing a comfort care bracelet or necklace that is intact and has not been defaced in order to comfort the patient or alleviate pain.
  - A. Clear the airway.
    - i. Excluding artificial ventilation, esophageal obturator airway or other advanced airway management.
  - B. Administer suction.
  - C. Provide Oxygen.
  - D. Administer pain medication.
  - E. Control bleeding.
  - F. Make comfort adjustments.

#### ***VII. Reciprocity***

1. All providers shall recognize a comfort care bracelet, necklace, or similar identifier issued by Maryland and Virginia as if issued in accordance with the Emergency Medical Services Non-Resuscitation Procedures Law of 2001 and shall act on the identifier in accordance with this act.

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#### ***VIII. Liability***

1. No licensed health care professional, EMS personnel, health care facility, government entity, or government employee shall be subject to criminal or civil liability, or be found to have committed an unprofessional act because the person, in good faith, resuscitates, withholds or withdraws resuscitation, or participates in resuscitating or withholding or withdrawing resuscitation in accordance with the Emergency Medical Services Non-Resuscitation Procedures Law of 2001.
2. Any person who falsifies or forges a comfort care order, willfully conceals or withholds personal knowledge of the revocation of a comfort care order contrary to the wishes of a person who has executed a comfort care order, or places a comfort care bracelet on a person for whom a comfort care order has not been executed in accordance with the Emergency Medical Services Non-Resuscitation Procedures Law of 2001, and who, because of the forgery, concealment, withholding, or placement, directly causes resuscitation to be withheld or withdrawn from a person and the death of the person to be hastened shall be subject to prosecution for unlawful homicide pursuant to section 798 of An Act To establish a code of law for the District of Columbia.